



FloorPrep

Legislative Digest

Friday, June 25, 1999

J.C. Watts, Jr.
Chairman
4th District, Oklahoma

House Meets at 9:00 a.m. for Legislative Business

Anticipated Floor Action:

H.R. 1802—Foster Care Independence Act



H.R. 1802—Foster Care Independence Act

Floor Situation: The House will consider H.R. 1802 as its only order of business today. Yesterday, the Rules Committee granted a structured rule providing one hour and 20 minutes of general debate, with one hour equally divided between the chairman and ranking minority member of the Ways & Means Committee, and 20 minutes equally divided between the chairman and ranking minority member of the Commerce Committee. The rule waives Budget Act points of order against the bill for authorizing new entitlement spending that becomes effective during the current fiscal year. It makes in order a committee amendment in the nature of a substitute as base text. The rule also makes in order three amendments, debatable in the order listed and for the amount of time specified below. The rule permits the chairman of the Committee of the Whole to postpone votes and reduce the voting time on a postponed vote to five minutes, so long as it follows a regular 15-minute vote. Finally, the rule provides one motion to recommit, with or without instructions.

Summary: H.R. 1802 establishes a new framework for federal foster care programs designed to provide additional funding and flexibility for states to prepare foster care teenagers to live on their own when they leave the system at age 18. The bill doubles annual state funding for these programs from \$70 million to \$140 million. In addition, the measure changes current law to allow foster care children who are eligible for federal funds to be able to save assets of up to \$10,000 (instead of \$1,000 under current law) without losing their eligibility. Finally, the bill allows states to provide Medicaid coverage to those 18, 19, and 20 year olds who have left foster care.

The measure establishes new procedures to crack down on fraud and abuse within the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program by tightening eligibility reviews and creating a new administrative process to allow the government to more quickly recover overpayments. The bill also establishes stiffer rules to collect overpayments from prisoners and those who receive benefits on behalf of others. Finally, the bill

(1) makes certain Filipino WWII veterans of the United States eligible for continued SSI benefits if they move back to the Philippines (under current law, they may receive SSI benefits only if they continue to reside in the U.S.); (2) eliminates the “hold harmless provision” in the 1996 welfare law (*P.L. 104-193*) that guarantees states will receive at least the same amount in federal child support funds as they did in 1995; and (3) makes a number of technical corrections to the 1996 welfare law.

CBO estimates that enactment will increase discretionary spending by \$7 million over the FY 2000-2004 period due to higher administrative expenses for the Social Security Administration. In addition, CBO estimates that enactment will (1) reduce direct spending by \$5 million over the same period; and (2) have no significant impact on the Social Security Disability Insurance program. The bill was introduced by Mrs. Johnson (CT) and Mr. Cardin and was reported by the Ways & Means Committee by voice vote on May 26, 1999.

Views: Both the Republican leadership and the Clinton Administration support passage of the measure.

Amendments: Yesterday, the Rules Committee granted a structured rule that makes in order the following amendments to H.R. 1802, debatable in the order listed and for the amount of time specified below:

— *Manager’s Amendment* —

Mrs. Johnson (CT) will offer a manager’s amendment, debatable for 10 minutes, to make a number of changes and technical modifications to the bill. Specifically, the amendment:

- * modifies the bill’s hold harmless provision so that states that share more of their child support collections with families may qualify for a partial hold harmless payment;
- * makes all World War II veterans (as opposed to just Filipino veterans in the bill) eligible for continued SSI benefits if they move outside of the United States;
- * ensures that SSI recipients who lose their benefits because of assets held in trust will not automatically lose their Medicaid benefits;
- * authorizes additional funds (i.e., an additional \$23 million in FY 2000) to finance adoption incentive payments to states that increase their level of adoptions in FY 1998. States have dramatically increased adoption levels recently, and the amount authorized for incentive payments is insufficient;
- * eliminates the HHS Secretary’s authority to redistribute funds not used by the states;
- * allows states to spend each year’s appropriation over a two-year period; and
- * clarifies that the federal government must provide states with payments to operate their Independent Living Program equal to their payments under previous law. ***Staff Contact: Ron Haskins, x5-1025***

Mr. Thompson (CA) will offer an amendment, debatable for 20 minutes, to require states to include in their state plan—which states currently must submit to the HHS Department in order to receive federal foster care grants—a certification that, before placing a foster child with prospective foster or adoptive

parents, such parents will be prepared with the knowledge and skills to adequately provide for the child's needs. **Staff Contact: David Flanders, x5-3311**

Mr. Buyer will offer an amendment, debatable for 20 minutes, to require the Social Security Administration to study the denial of SSI benefits to family farmers with resources of under \$100,000 in cases where the family chooses to care for a disabled dependant at home. The amendment requires the SSA Commissioner to submit a report to Congress within one year of enactment. The sponsor argues that current law and regulations may discriminate against family farmers—some of whom may have a large asset base, but whose assets are tied up in the farm and thus illiquid. **Staff Contact: Myrna Dugan, x5-5037**

Additional Information: See *Legislative Digest*, Vol. XXVIII, #18, June 21, 1999.



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